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GLORIOUSLY BEAUTIFUL



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GLORIOUSLY BEAUTIFUL.



GLORIOUSLY BEAUTIFUL

A TALE

DEDICATED TO

THE LADY G..... H.

Wage Du zu irren und zu träumen,
Hoher Sinn liegt oft in kind'schem Spiel.
SCHILLER.

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MDCCLXI.



GLORIOUSLY BEAUTIFUL.

MANY years ago, two young ladies, named Olivia and Theresa, were together at a school in Germany. They were both very plain ; but Olivia, who was a very good and sensible girl, wisely thought that, if it had been right for her to be beautiful, she would have been made so ; and as she was not, no doubt there was a good reason for her not being so. Theresa, on the contrary, was always making herself miserable because she was plain. She had three grown-up sisters, who were all very good-looking, and though they were good-natured girls, and really fond of her, she quite hated the idea of being seen with them, because she was so ugly and they so pretty. She thought everybody would laugh at her. In vain did Olivia bring forward every argument she could think of to comfort her. No—Theresa would not be comforted. In the same school there was a little girl named Clara, who was very beautiful. The schoolmistress was excessively proud of this child ; and whenever any visitors came, Clara was sure to be sent for, and was always equally sure to be immensely admired. No wonder, then, that admired and petted by all, Clara

thought a good deal of herself. I said admired and petted by *all*, but no—Theresa was an exception. Admire Clara she certainly did, for it was impossible not to do so ;—but she hated her—not because she was conceited, but because she was so beautiful, and Theresa herself was plain, and this made her dreadfully jealous.

“ Only think,” said she to Olivia one day, “ only think what was said of that detestable little creature to-day ! You know we were all sitting under the trees in the garden ; well, two ladies passed by, and they stopped when they came to little Adèle, who, you know, is about *her* height ; and one of them said to the other, ‘ No, that is not the one I mean, the one I mean is quite *gloriously beautiful*.’ Did you ever hear anything so silly in your life, Olivia ? ”

Olivia could not help thinking that Theresa herself was quite as silly as the lady in question, but she merely replied :

“ It certainly was a silly remark to make, but really, Theresa, I cannot think why you should blame poor Clara ; she cannot help being ‘ gloriously beautiful.’ ”

“ Oh, but she is so horribly conceited, and it is so absurd to see the fuss Madame and every one makes about her, and her beauty. Oh, how I wish *I* were beautiful ! I think it is very hard that every one should be beautiful but me.”

“ Nonsense, my dear,” said Olivia ; “ you know I am very plain too ; but I do not distress myself about it, and I can’t think why you should either.”

It was now very near the time of the holidays, and Olivia, whose home was in America, was not to return to school. This made

Theresa very unhappy, for she was younger than Olivia, and had still another year to stay, and she thought how dull it would be without her friend.

"I wish you were not going away entirely," she said to her one day.

"So do I, for some things. I shall be sorry to leave you, dear, and besides I have been very happy at school ; but then I have not seen my mother for a long, long time, and she has nobody but me to take care of her now she is ill, so I both ought, and want to go home ; and, besides, you know you will only stay here a year longer, and then you will go home, and be taken out as a grown-up young lady, and you will no longer be dull."

"No, but I shall be miserable," thought Theresa ; for she hated the thought of coming out, as she knew how ugly she would look by the side of her sisters.

At length the holidays came. Olivia set off for America, and Theresa was to travel with her mother and sisters, who, however, wrote to tell her that they could not come for her until two or three days after all the other girls were gone. They begged that if Madame went away herself, she would allow Theresa to remain till they could fetch her. Madame did go away, after making every arrangement for Theresa's comfort. Theresa was sitting in the schoolroom, on her first evening, all alone ; and though there was a cheerful fire and candles, she felt rather dull. Raising her eyes suddenly, she saw her own face reflected in the mirror opposite ; it seemed to her that she was more hideous than ever, and she impatiently exclaimed,—

" Oh! I would give *anything in the world* to be gloriously beautiful!"

" *Anything in the world,*" said a little voice; " that is rather a strong expression."

Theresa started, and looked about her.

" Whoever are you?" she said, " I don't see any one."

" That's very likely," replied the voice, " but I want to talk to you a little. Should you like to be ' gloriously beautiful?'"

" Why, you heard me say so," said Theresa; " but where on earth are you?" she added, impatiently looking round.

" Ah! but you said you would give anything in the world; are you sure of that?"

Theresa now arose, candle in hand, determined to discover from whence this mysterious voice proceeded. For some time she searched in vain; but at length she spied, in the farthest corner of the room, a little creature, and, on advancing to look at it, she beheld the oddest little figure imaginable. It was no larger than a child of three years old, but was formed like a man,—a cocked hat under his arm, and the very thinnest little black legs you ever saw. It was altogether so like the figure of Punch, that Theresa could hardly help laughing. The little man bowed low to her, and said,—

" Well, what do you think of me?"

" Hideous!" said Theresa.

" Well, and I think I might almost return the compliment," said the little man.

Theresa at this was so very angry that she walked away, put the candle on the table, and sat down by the fire. Presently she said,—



"It's very cold out there ; won't you come nearer the fire ?"

"Thank you, that's very civil of you ; I think I will," said the little man.

So saying, he gave a hop which brought him to a chair close by Theresa, where he ensconced himself comfortably, his little legs sticking straight out.

"Now," he said, "let's have our little talk ; I will make you gloriously beautiful."

"Will you really !" said Theresa.

"Yes, on one condition."

"And what is that ?"

"Oh, that's a little secret ; I can't tell you that—but you know you said you would do *anything in the world*."

"Oh, I am sick of that expression," said Theresa.

"Well, but now I ask you, will you really do what I tell you ?"

"Not unless I know what it is," said Theresa.

"Oh, then, our business is finished," said the little man, "for I cannot tell you."

So saying, he jumped off his chair, and, before Theresa could stop him, had disappeared. When he was gone, Theresa again took up the candle, and walked to the mirror, and it seemed to her that her eyes were smaller and greener, her mouth larger, and her hair redder than ever ; indeed she felt as if forced to agree with what the little man had said, and proclaim herself hideous. She then went back to her seat by the fire place, and spent the rest of the evening in solitude. Next morning she received a letter from her mother, saying, she

would come and fetch her that very day. And before the day was over she arrived with the three sisters ; and oh ! how plain Theresa looked beside them. Her youngest sister, Blanche, had come out that year, and had been quite the belle of the season,—people said she was even prettier than her very pretty sisters. Theresa was to come out next year—how she dreaded the thought ! Her sisters were very glad to see her, and were excessively kind to her. They went to Italy and saw everything that was to be seen ; but her sisters were surprised to observe how very melancholy Theresa always looked, and she could never give them a good reason for it when they questioned her. She might have enjoyed herself very much, had she not always been thinking that everybody who saw her was remarking her ugliness. She felt now a longing for a second visit from the little man, but he never came. She returned to school. The first thing she saw there was Clara just arrived from Paris, and magnificently dressed. Every one was remarking how beautiful she looked, and Theresa was more angry and miserable than ever. She went in to see Madame, and there was Clara unpacking some things she had brought for Madame. But what surprised Theresa most was, that, while she was speaking to Madame, she saw in the farthest corner of the room the little man. It was very odd,—she was sure it was he, and yet neither Madame nor Clara seemed to notice him. Next morning, at breakfast, Clara was seated exactly opposite to her. A good-natured girl, who sat next to Theresa, said to her,—

“ Just look at Clara ; how do you like her in that net ? *I* think she looks more beautiful than ever.”

Theresa looked so angry and disgusted, that the girl afterwards said to one of her friends,—

“Do you know if Theresa ever had a sister who died, whose name was Clara? for when I made some remark upon little Clara to her the other day, she looked so pained. I’ll take good care never to mention Clara to her again.”

That night how Theresa longed to see the little man once more! She kept awake a long time, and just as she was beginning to despair of seeing him, she heard a tap at the window. She raised herself up in bed, and fancied she saw by the moonlight, which streamed into the room, a tiny shadow outside. Suppose it should be he! All doubts were soon dispelled from her mind by the sudden appearance of the little man at her bedside. He made her a low bow, and thus began :—

“Blanche is very pretty, Eleanor’s handsome, but I think I admire Isabella the most.”

These remarks enraged Theresa. In the first place, she did not like *him* to discuss her sisters; and secondly, she was provoked at hearing her own thoughts repeated by him.

“I wish you would go away,” she said; “I want to go to sleep.”

“Oh, indeed, that’s what you say now, is it? Goodnight to you, then. I will send you a pleasant dream.”

So saying, he disappeared, and Theresa soon fell asleep, and dreamt as follows :—She fancied that she had left school, and was just going to be presented at Court. She came down stairs ready dressed, and, in a few minutes, so did Blanche, dressed exactly like her; and

Theresa thought in her dream how pretty Blanche looked, and how hideous she did. Their mother then came and arranged some things in their dress. Theresa then thought they had arrived at the palace. She was before the Queen; and just as she was letting down her train she heard a voice say, "Gloriously beautiful!"—and then there was a murmur of admiration all round, and she felt it was for *her*, not for Blanche. And she was so happy in her dream, that she woke up laughing quite loud. She thought if she could feel like that, how happy she should be. Her schoolfellows said,—

"Why, Theresa, how gay you are in your sleep!"

Theresa got up. All day she could not forget her dream. Oh, how she longed that it would come true! That night she almost determined that, if the little man came again, she would agree to his condition; and he did come again.

"Well," he said, "how did you like the dream?"

Theresa did not answer.

"You had a letter this morning," said the little man.

Now Theresa *had* had a letter that morning. It was from Olivia, begging and imploring her not to attach so much importance to being beautiful, &c. &c.

"How do you know that?" said she.

"Oh, I saw the letter," he said.

"Very impertinent of you to look at my letters," said Theresa.

"I looked over your friend's shoulder while she was writing."

"That is impossible, for she is in America."

"Ah, but I was in America, too," said the little man.

"You must travel *very* fast," said Theresa.

"Yes, these little legs travel very fast;" and he gave a hop into the air, which quite frightened her, for she thought he was going to jump on to her bed.

"Did you wish that that letter should be sent?" she asked.

"Oh, no; *I* thought it a very silly letter; did not you?"

"Hush," said Theresa, "you will wake up the other girls."

"Oh, no," said the little man, "nobody will ever hear what I say, if I don't wish them to hear; but do not *you* talk too loud, or *you will* be overheard."

"And," continued Theresa, "if you do not make haste, daylight will come on, and we shall have to get up."

"Not at all," said the little man, "time always stands still for me; but it is for you to make haste. Will you agree to my condition, or no?"

"I wish you would only tell me what it is," said Theresa. "Is it anything wrong?"

"That's as people think."

"Is it a thing I ought not to do?"

"*That's* as people think, too," replied the little man.

"Will it prevent my marrying?"

"Oh, certainly not," he replied.

"Will it prevent my being happy?"

"That depends upon circumstances."

"Is there any way of escape after I have done it?"

"Yes, there is one, but it is *very* improbable that you will find it.

The time is going fast," he continued, (taking out an immense watch almost as big as himself), "and I must go;" and his face grew blacker and darker at each word he spoke.

"Oh, not yet, not yet, please," said Theresa; "are you sure it is not wrong?"

"We answer not such foolish questions," he replied; "I must be going."

"Oh, no, no," said Theresa, "I will do it."

"*DONE!*" said the little man, putting his hand on her arm; "now you have sold yourself."

"Oh, to what?" cried Theresa; but he was gone.

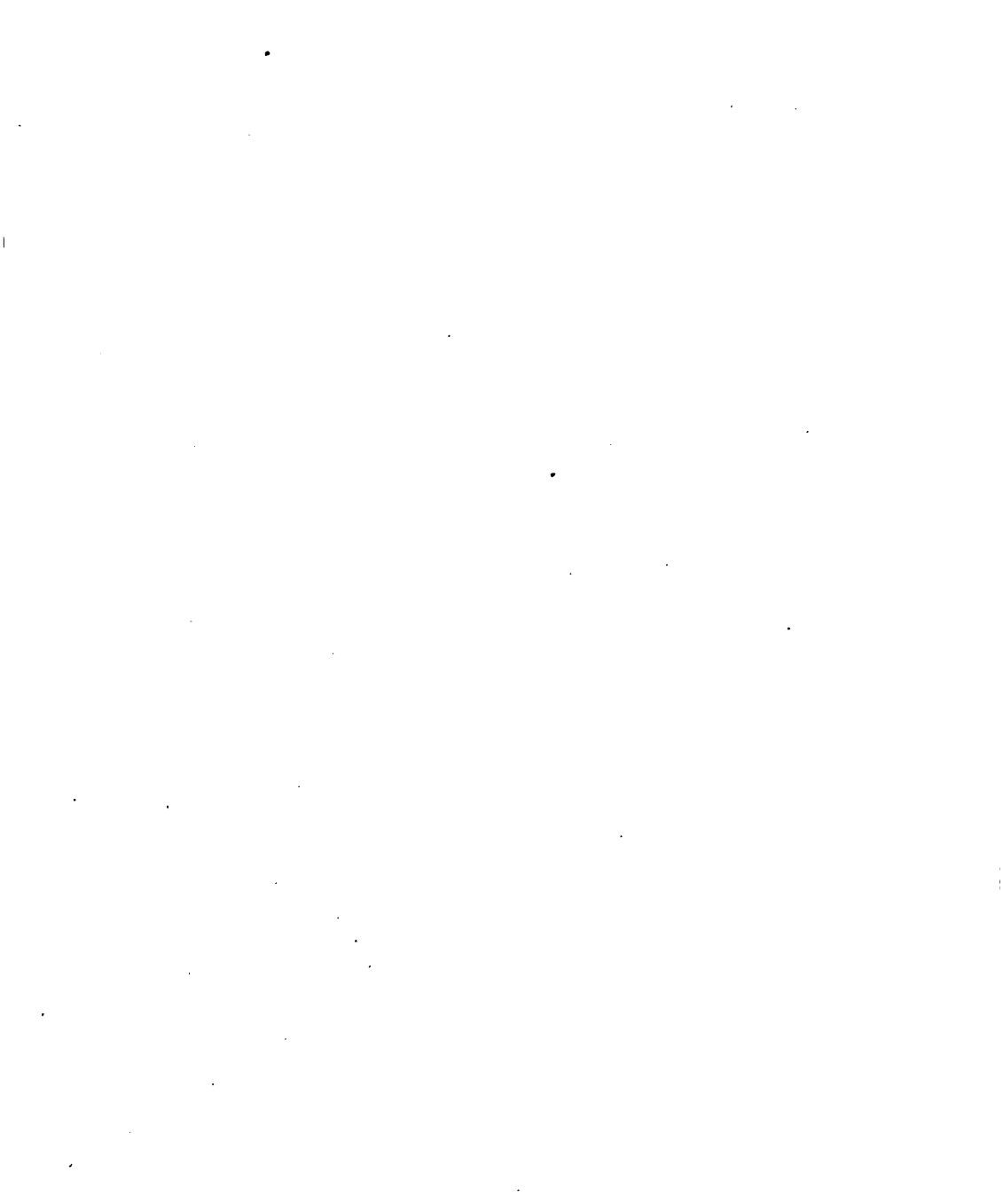
Next morning Theresa slept till very late, and her schoolfellows were down stairs before she was half dressed. She was soon ready, however; but, before she left the room, she took her Bible in her hand, and was astonished to find that she could not open it. She tried again, but in vain; it was as stiff as if it were made of wood. Shocked at this discovery, she threw herself on her knees; but before she could open her lips, the little man had his hand on her mouth, and said,—

"No, never that again. You have asked for more than was given you, and you may never ask for more now."

When one of the teachers went up to see why Theresa did not come down, she was found in a deep fainting fit. It was a long time before she could be brought to herself, and the first thing she said was,

"Oh, is it all a dream, or is it true?"

The doctor, however, imposed silence upon her; and, on feeling her





pulse, he pronounced that she was going to have the small-pox. And she did have it, very very badly. Her mother was sent for, and by dint of careful nursing she at length began to recover. Her eyes were, however, so much affected by her illness, that the doctor said she must remain in a perfectly dark room for three weeks, if she wished to recover her sight. During her illness, strange as it may seem, she had almost forgotten its dreadful cause. At last the three weeks were ended; and as her mother gradually opened the shutters, Theresa observed a surprised and startled expression on her face.

"Oh, mamma," she said, "what is it?—am I dreadfully marked?"

"*Marked*, my dear," said her mother, "you certainly are, and that for life, but in a very different way from what you suppose! You are perfectly '*gloriously beautiful*.'"

At these words the whole truth flashed upon Theresa, and, burying her face in her hands, she seemed so much overcome, that her mother, attributing her agitation to thankful joy at finding she was not marked, thought it best to leave her for a short time to herself.

Of course, everybody was immensely surprised at the change that had come over Theresa, but she seemed so pained if ever it was mentioned, that this was spared her. At length the doctor said she might go home. The day was fixed, and Theresa bade adieu to school for ever. As they drove up to their home, she saw her sisters standing at the hall door. The carriage stopped, and she alighted. Her sisters drew back in astonishment.

"How altered!" they exclaimed simultaneously.

Then, seeing Theresa look very much distressed, at a sign from

their mother, they hastened to change the subject, supposing that Theresa had no idea of the manner in which she was altered.

After some months they went to ———. Theresa was to be introduced, and presented at Court. She hoped, at first, that parties and balls might partially drown the recollection of the past, and make her less miserable ; but the feeling of abhorrence of herself and her wickedness never left her. She was universally admired, but every word of admiration was a reproach to her. At this time she became acquainted with the Count of Schlossbergen, who first admired her beauty and then herself. It was the morning when she was to be presented. She came down stairs ready dressed ; and her sister Blanche, dressed exactly as she was, entered the room directly after. Their mother then came, and having made some trifling alteration in their dress, set off with them for the Palace. Theresa was in the presence of the Queen ; and just as she was letting down her train, she heard a voice exclaim behind her, “Gloriously beautiful !”—and there was a general murmur of admiration. Theresa’s dream was fulfilled ! But now she more fully understood it ; for she knew the voice—it was the Count’s. But what had been a happy dream was far from a happy reality ; and oh ! how she wished that it were still a dream—but that was not to be. A short time after this the Count made her an offer of marriage ; but she felt that to marry him would be a sort of deceit,—so she refused. Her mother was much disappointed, for the marriage was beyond her expectations, and she asked her daughter why she would not marry the Count. Theresa found it difficult to answer. She could not say she disliked him ; for, if it had not been



that she felt she must deceive him if she married him, he was the very husband she would have chosen. At last, wearied and perplexed by her mother's questions, she consented to become his wife. The marriage was to take place as soon as possible, for the Count was impatient. He had a sister who thought herself very pretty; and he constantly told her that Theresa was far more beautiful than she was, and yet was so modest, so unconscious, and shrinking from all admiration. He was right;—she was so, but he little knew the reason.

We will now pass over several years. Theresa is the mother of four children,—Rudolph, Flora, Rose, and Olivia. Rudolph was remarkably like the Count, but Rose was the image of Theresa. Flora was very beautiful,—people called her the queen of the flowers; but Olivia was like Theresa's old self,—herself when she was innocent and ugly. People wondered at her plainness,—it was such a contrast to the beauty of Rose and Flora. But she was Theresa's darling,—her favourite of all the children. The beauty of Rose and Flora always gave her a pang. She took care never to dress them in a manner that should seem to show off their loveliness; and they ran about in the park and gardens of their country home in scarcely less simple attire than the peasant children around them. But while lookers-on might envy her these beautiful children, her very love for them became to Theresa an instrument of continual torture. She longed to teach them the high and holy truths of religion, but she could not. The moment she opened her mouth on any such subject, all her ideas became clouded, and not till she had resigned the attempt would the cloud pass away. She might teach them what else she would, and

her mind was as clear as ever, but the privileges she had undervalued were lost to her. She shed many bitter tears of late repentance, but the deed was done, and she did not know the secret by which the spell might be removed. What she could do for her children she did. She procured an excellent governess and nurse, and to them she was obliged to trust for the teaching which ought to have come from her own lips. But what a trust was this! She could not even pray that her children might be well taught. Not to be able to pray! Oh! it was a grief—a horror—that she could not have imagined. In our utmost helplessness—hopelessness—let what will of resources be taken from us, *that* is left if our own wrong-doing have not forfeited it; but Theresa's had. Once, a few months after her marriage, she felt this trial sorely. An accident happened, by some of the earth giving way in a mine belonging to the Count, and several men were buried alive. On hearing of the circumstance, the Count instantly set off for the scene of the calamity, that he might make sure that every prompt measure was employed for the extrication of the unfortunates. Theresa trembled for his safety, and implored him not to descend into the mine, lest the earth should again give way.

"I will not run into any unnecessary danger, but I may not promise not to go down, till I see what is to be done."

Then seeing her unappeased anxiety, he added,—

"Do not fear for me, dear, but do what you can to help me and these poor men—pray for our safety."

She burst into tears, and turned hastily away. Once, some time after this, a ray of hope dawned upon her. Her sister Blanche came



on a visit ; and seeing a Bible lying on Theresa's table, she took it up, and said,—

“ Oh, how well you have kept your Bible ; mine which I had at the same time looks much older.”

Theresa answered vaguely, and watched with a trembling hope that Blanche might lay the book down open ; but alas ! she quietly closed it, and restored it to its place. Theresa's heart sank with the disappointment.

When Rudolph could read, however, he often came to her room, and would open her Bible, and find the verse he had been told to learn. Then Theresa looked over his shoulder ; but, while he sat innocently absorbed in spelling out the words, to her the whole page appeared a blank, and a constant sound of harsh laughter in her ears prevented her from hearing what he read. So it was at Church. So, everywhere, was she made to feel, that, having once been discontented with the decree of Heaven, its counsels were now as a sealed book to her.

When Rudolph was eight years old, the Count thought proper to take a house in town, and remove his family thither for a few months. Rudolph, however, was left in the country with the clergyman of the parish,—a good and clever man, who had for some time acted as the boy's tutor, and was now to receive him into his own house, where his wife promised to bestow a mother's care on the pupil of her husband.

“ Ah,” thought Theresa, “ such care as *his* wretched mother has never been able to supply.”

She knew the clergyman and his wife were truly religious people,

and that was why she had prevailed on the Count to resign his darling Rudolph to their care. Rudolph was no longer the only son. About eight months before they removed to town another little boy had been added to their family. He was named Hyacinth, and was the loveliest child that eyes could see. But his beauty, like that of his sisters, was but as a curse in the eyes of Theresa. In town, to the great annoyance of the nurse, Theresa persisted in dressing her little girls in the peasant costume they had worn in the country. Their little white cotton sun bonnets, thick boots, and brown Holland blouses, made them a striking contrast to the gaily dressed children they met in their daily walks; but no remonstrance had any weight, and the nurse was obliged to bear the Countess' caprice, as she not unnaturally called it. Accident, however, caused a change in Theresa's views. One day, as she was returning from a drive through the park, she saw her children conspicuous at some distance by the white sun bonnets. She stopped, and dismissed her carriage, saying she would walk home, and then went on to try and overtake the children. She had nearly come up to them, but was kept back by two ladies, who occupied the pathway just in front of her, and she could not avoid overhearing their remarks.

"Yes, they are," said one, "you may always know them by their ridiculous dress,—such affectation in the Countess, pretending she does not wish their beauty to be remarked, and then sending them out so remarkable, that everybody stops to look at them."

"They really are beautiful," replied her companion, "but it is very bad taste to make them so conspicuous."

Before the Countess joined her children, she had made a resolution which greatly astonished the nurse. Taking her aside at once, she told her she had changed her mind with respect to the children's dress, and that she wished them to be furnished as quickly as possible with everything necessary to make them appear like others in their rank. The nurse was delighted ; she said it was not late, and, if the Countess pleased, she could go at once and order everything. Theresa consented, and herself walked home with the children and nurserymaid. The nurse set off on her glad errand, and so well did she speed, that the next afternoon saw her proudly entering the park with her little charges, in all the glories of white dresses, hats and feathers, ribbons and embroidery,—which adornments, it must be confessed, were not unbecoming to their bright eyes, flowing hair, and graceful movements. But poor Theresa could not please everybody. A few days after she was sitting in a shop near to some other purchasers, who, while selecting what they wanted, were talking over the present style of dress.

“ But the most absurd thing is the way people dress children now-a-days ! ”

“ Yes, and of all children the most absurdly dressed are the Countess of Schlossbergen's. I saw them in the park yesterday,—the little girls in frocks that might have taken a year to embroider, silk stockings, and long white feathers in their hats ; and as to the baby he was one mass of beautiful open work, and his sash full half a yard in width. It is really wicked of people to be so extravagant.”

Theresa wished she had done nothing more wicked.

Yet more annoying to Theresa than the admiration lavished on her children was that of which she was herself the object. Her portrait was in every shop window, and the beauty of the incomparable Countess was, she well knew, a frequent topic of conversation. But all this, belonging as it did only to the outside world in which she moved, would have affected her but slightly. Her husband's admiration was what cut her to the heart—he was so affectionately proud of her beauty, and, at the same time, he so honoured and loved her for her indifference to it. To be taken for worse than we really are is no doubt a trial; but to be taken for better than we know ourselves to be, and by those we love best!—to be accounted true, when our very look is a lie—to be called pure when our conscience is burdened with sin—to be praised for magnanimity, when our motives have been base, our desires unworthy—oh! this is to have coals of fire heaped on our head indeed;—and this was Theresa's portion. Many envied her. Many thought that rank, wealth, beauty, such as hers must conduce to happiness,—and so they should, but not without God. Theresa had all *this* world can give, but she had forfeited the blessings of the other to obtain it, and by so doing she had also forfeited—that without which no advantages are felt as blessings—her own peace of mind. After an evening spent in brilliant drawing-rooms, where she shone the undisputed Queen of beauty—where even her unassuming manners might almost have made her the unenvied Queen of love—she returned home to spend a sleepless night in silent tears, and deep repentance. But even this did not mar her fatal loveliness, and even the observant eye of affection could note no trace of her sorrow. So





passed away the gay season, and, after paying several visits to friends in different parts of the country, and seeing the children once more settled in their town house after a long enjoyment of seaside pleasures, the Count and Countess proceeded to their castle in the Tyrol, in order to pay a visit to Rudolph, who had remained there during this whole time. Theresa was longing to see her dear, noble boy again. It was a great happiness to her to find that he more than ever resembled his father in appearance, and was not in the least like herself ; but as she marked the frank ingenuous expression of his countenance, and heard the high tone of truth and generosity which pervaded even his childish conversation, she thought with a pang of his changed feelings towards herself, when he should know her terrible, disgraceful story. That he must know it sooner or later, he and his father too, was a conviction ever present to her mind, and she felt sure she could never survive their scorn. It was in one of these moods that she one day entered Rudolph's room, when he and his father had gone out riding. She looked around to see if there were anything that the ingenuity of love could devise to add to the comfort of the well cared for apartment. Her eye fell on her own portrait, which was supported on a miniature easel, and stood in a conspicuous place on the centre table. Theresa sighed deeply. Her sigh was echoed as from a distance.

“ Who is that ? ” she inquired hastily ; “ Who sighed ? ”

“ Your friend,” said a harsh cracked voice ; and looking down she beheld the little man, whose spell was the burden and the boon she possessed.

"My friend!" repeated Theresa, in accents of contempt and loathing.

"Yes, your friend; and what of that, you sighed too, and for the same cause."

"What cause?"

"Your picture. And yet there is nothing to sigh about that I can see. It's gloriously beautiful!—isn't it?"

"I hate the beauty!"

"Oh, you do! Ha, ha, ha! women are changeable. Perhaps you would like to lose it?"

"Oh, could I?—can you make me as I was before?"

"Oh, yes. Come along, we'll go to town together. Never mind the Count; he won't be home till you are back again, and then he won't know you!"

Not know her! No! it was too true. The ugly Theresa the Count had never known—never loved! Her heart sank. The newly awakened hope died within her.

"Come, make haste," said the little man; "what are you waiting for?"

"Could not you ——? might not I undo the sin? I wish that—but—"

"No buts. You'll be a fright—the Count won't know you, and Rudolph won't love you, but if you wish it."

"Can you not *change* it? *Anything* else I could bear;—take away part of the spell, can't you?—won't you? Oh, I will do *anything* if you will!"

“All, or none,” said the little man sternly. “Choose, I can’t wait.”

“Oh! one moment!”—and in that moment all the joys of life seemed to pass before her—her husband’s love, her friends, her children—Rudolph’s parting words sounded in her ears—“My own dear most lovely mamma!” Should he come back and not know her?—shrink from her as a stranger?—shun her as a sinner? Oh no.

“No!” She spoke the word aloud, and the little man vanished. Theresa was beautiful still! Before she had time to reflect on her own weakness and misery, Rudolph was at her side—his arm was round her neck—and, as he gazed fondly on her face, and then turned to the picture, he said,—

“No, they have not made it beautiful enough; I always said so.”

Was it her sin, or its punishment, that made Theresa weep so bitterly that night?

On that day a lady had called at the Count’s house in town, and asked to see the Countess, giving her own name as Mrs. Halliburton. She expressed great regret and disappointment on learning that the Countess was out of town, and inquired whether all the family were absent. Hearing that the children were in the house, she said she was a very old friend of the Countess, and was most anxious to be allowed to see her children; and a message to that effect being sent to the head nurse, she begged the visitor to walk up stairs to the nursery. All the little girls were there presented in due form to the stranger. She seemed much struck with the beauty of the two elder ones, but did not respond to the nurse’s remark that Rose was con-

sidered exactly like the Countess. When, however, little Olivia came forward, Mrs. Halliburton exclaimed—

“ Ah, this is indeed a striking likeness !—now I fancy I see my dear Theresa again ; ”—and, taking the child in her arms, she caressed her with much affection.

“ Well,” said the nurse, “ to be sure people’s eyes do see differently ! It is the first time I ever heard anybody say the Countess Olivia was like her mamma ! ”

“ Olivia ! is your name Olivia, darling ? ” said the lady.

“ Yes, after mamma’s old friend.”

“ I am that old friend. My name is Olivia—and when mamma comes back, you must tell her, her old friend is very, very sorry not to see her.”

“ You can see mamma’s picture, though,” said the child.

“ Yes, certainly,” said the nurse,—and Rose and Flora willingly came forward to lead the way to the drawing-room.

There, facing her as she entered, Mrs. Halliburton saw a beautiful full-length portrait of a young lady, in all the bloom of youth and loveliness, and whose face and colouring so exactly resembled Rose, that the introductory, “ There is mamma,” was not needed. But could that be a faithful portrait ? There stood the living copy to attest the fact. Mrs. Halliburton’s voice trembled as she asked—

“ Is it very like your mamma ? ”

“ Oh, yes, very ! ” cried Flora, “ and is it not like Rose, too ? One day a man came to copy it, and he said it was ‘ gloriously beautiful ; ’ and so I think. But mamma was quite vexed, and she

did not wish it to be copied, but papa had it done to give to Rudolph. The copy was quite small—a miniature—but oh, so very, very beautiful ! ”

Mrs. Halliburton sighed deeply, and looked at little Olivia, whose pale face and light grey eyes seemed to interest her more than the bright beauty of Rose and Flora. After a few minutes she took her leave, telling the children she expected to be in town again in about three months, and would then call in the hope of finding that their mother had returned. Theresa was very much grieved when she heard that her old schoolfellow had actually been in her house during her absence. Mrs. Halliburton wrote word that, having just come to Germany for the first time since her marriage, and having only two days at her disposal, she had made it her first object to seek out Theresa.

“ But,” she added, “ I doubt whether I should have recognised you if we had met, for they tell me your second daughter is exactly like you, while only in your little Olivia could I trace the likeness to my old friend ; and to her, therefore, my heart was more drawn, than to her very lovely sisters.”

Theresa wrote in reply—

“ I am so glad you were pleased with my little Olivia. Dear as they all are, I may confess to you, that she is my heart’s darling—my own most treasured child. Oh ! Olivia, may you never know the hours of bitterness the beauty of Rose and Hyacinth has caused me ; Rudolph and Flora are exactly like their father.”

But now other hours of bitterness were at hand, and not Rose’s

beauty, but her danger, caused them. She was seized with small-pox, and before the nature of the disease could be ascertained, Flora, Olivia, and the baby had caught the infection. The alarmed nurse wrote off to the Countess, who instantly resolved to return to her children ; but the Count had never had the disorder, so she implored him to remain in the country with Rudolph. On arriving in town she found Rose too ill to recognise her, and Flora only a degree less weak. Olivia was very poorly, but the illness had attacked her with less of violence, and little Hyacinth had not yet come to the worst stage. Theresa nursed them all with trembling care, but oh ! the heart-breaking sorrow that was hers, when Rose, fast-sinking, regained her consciousness enough to try and repeat the prayers and hymns she knew, and Theresa was obliged to leave her to her governess for help when her memory failed, or when she begged to hear the words of peace read to her. How the Countess then envied her children's faithful governess ! Rose died—but Flora rallied ; and in a few weeks she was able to be sent to the seaside under the charge of her governess. Hyacinth, too young to speak the words his mother could not answer, did not live to learn her sin, and her sorrow—he and Rose, who had inherited her beauty, were taken from before her loving eyes, and she was left alone with Olivia. Left—for no seaside journey was prescribed to Olivia. No movement, no exertion, seemed possible to her now. Her fever was gone, her face was not changed, but she had lost her sight, and the use of her limbs seemed also denied her. Day by day she lay on the sofa in her mother's room, still and silent, not seeming to care what befell, if only her mother were near. If Theresa

crossed the room, Olivia would beg her not to leave her ; otherwise she scarcely spoke. And there was a sad reason for this. Olivia had one day asked her mother to read to her some of the hymns she loved ; it was the day of Rose's funeral. Theresa had been horror-struck as she felt her inability to comply with the request, and had made an excuse ; and then Olivia, remembering the sad event of the day, had asked her to read instead part of the burial service. Theresa threw herself on her knees by the sofa, and leaned over the child, crying bitterly, as she said—

“ Oh, my darling, don't ask me. I can't do it. I would give anything to do it ; but I can't.”

“ Anything ! ” said a strange echo in the room.

Theresa started and looked round, but the room was kept dark for the sake of Olivia's eyes, and nothing unusual was to be seen. From that day Olivia scarcely spoke.

The Count had now come to town ; he was staying at the house of a friend, but came every day to inquire for the children, and Theresa then went down stairs to speak to him, in a room quite separate from the other part of the house. One evening when she was sitting with him there, a servant came and told her that Mrs. Halliburton was in the drawing-room, and wished to know if the Countess would see her.

“ In the drawing-room !—does she know the danger ? ” cried the Count.

“ Yes.”

Mrs. Halliburton had been warned, but said she had had the small-pox, and was not at all afraid. The Countess rose to go to her.

“ And pray, bring her here,” said the Count, “ when you have had your private interview. I want to know your old friend.”

It was a strange meeting after so many years. Olivia had left her friend a plain, awkward-looking school girl, in high health and spirits, though longing for advantages that were wisely withheld ;—she met her now a sad and sorrowful woman, possessed of a beauty that neither sadness nor sorrow could dim, but longing to be rid of the brilliant gift she had so unwisely coveted. Misery was once strangely defined as “ a wish fulfilled.” To Theresa it had indeed been so. Before many words were spoken Mrs. Halliburton had learned this much. She could not repress a movement of surprise when she looked on her early friend. The likeness to the picture which she had just been gazing on for the second time was striking, but the likeness to her old friend and schoolfellow was gone. Soon the two were in earnest conversation.

“ Oh, Theresa, tell me, did you get a letter from me just before you left school ? ”

“ I did indeed, and would that I had taken your advice.”

“ Then it was as I feared—you found the temptation too strong, and were not afraid of the condition.”

“ Is it possible that you knew— ! ”

“ The offer was made first to me, and I feared that to you also— ”

“ You rejected it ! Oh, you were always good. And did you then know the horrible condition ? ”

“ I did not, and do not now ; but is it so horrible ? How have you borne it so long ? ”



“ Ah, how indeed ! I have fancied that the fatal gift was accompanied by the still more terrible one of immortality, which even a goddess has been said to deplore. You know what I have lost—what more I may lose who can tell ; but I would give anything in the world to lose what I once longed for.”

“ Anything in the world ! ” repeated a well remembered voice.

The two friends rose hastily, and beheld at the end of the long room a strange little figure, which Theresa instantly recognised with a feeling of chill horror.

“ ‘ Anything in the world,’—I have heard that phrase before. You meant it then, do you mean it now ? ”

“ I do indeed,” said Theresa.

“ Well, it’s now or never. I did not think you two would meet so soon ; and had you never met at all, so much the better for my spell. But now, if Mrs. Halliburton is willing to tell the Count all, and if you are willing to take again all I deprived you of,”—and he laughed a fiendish laugh,—“ take it and enjoy it.”

He laughed again, and sprang out of the window. A deep silence ensued. Then Theresa related in a low and trembling voice all the dreadful particulars of the spell to which she had been subjected ; and when she had ended her painful story, she said—

“ Now, Olivia, will you go ?—the Count is in the library.”

“ But how—what shall I say ? He will not believe me.”

“ Seeing is believing,” said Theresa. “ Oh, go to him, and break for me this horrid spell.”

In fear and trembling Mrs. Halliburton went. The Countess waited

alone, and intensely anxious. In about half an hour Mrs. Halliburton returned. She was very pale, and did not speak ; but she took Theresa by the arm, and led her to the library. The Count stood on the hearthrug, looking anxiously towards the door. When Theresa appeared, he took one step forward to meet her, and then sank back on a chair, covering his face with his hands.

Mrs. Halliburton looked at Theresa. The spell was broken. Theresa advanced trembling to her husband, and knelt beside his chair.

“ Do not look at me,” she said ; “ I do not ask that—but speak one word to say you forgive me, and then I will go.”

Her voice faltered as she said the last words, but she did not move, till the Count, with his face still averted, said—

“ Go. I will tell your friend all I wish.”

She rose, too much self condemned to oppose anything to this stern decree, and silently weeping she left the room. Then the Count stood up and said—

“ Mrs. Halliburton, now you have done so much, I know you will do more. Go to Theresa. Tell her this house is her home—mine is at Schlossbergenheim. Rudolph will stay there with me ; I shall send for Flora. Olivia need never know what she cannot see.”

This resolution he carried out. Theresa was miserable of course, but she felt that he was justified, and there was some comfort in being no longer obliged to carry on a system of deception. She was much grieved to find that Mrs. Halliburton had to leave Europe in the course of the following week ; but when she discovered that their meeting had been the condition on which hung her deliverance from

the hated spell, she felt deeply thankful that she had been in town during her friend's second visit. There was another part to the condition, however; it was necessary not only that the friends should meet, but also that Theresa should, in the presence of one who had declined the offered gift, confess herself utterly wretched in its possession, and willing to give "anything in the world" to regain her former state. We have seen how both these conditions were fulfilled.

For two years the Count and Theresa never met. Olivia remained with her mother; and Flora, accompanied by her governess, spent a month of each year in town. Rudolph did not leave his father. At length, however, this long and sad separation began to tell on Theresa's health. She could no longer bear the grief of utter estrangement from her husband and her son, and she became paler and thinner day by day. To Olivia, of course, the change was imperceptible. Theresa's spirits had sunk as her health declined, but she still contrived to have a cheerful word for her little blind daughter, and tried to command the tones of her voice, that the child might note no difference. A visit from Flora, however, revealed the truth to Olivia.

"How very ill mamma looks!" were the first words Flora said to her sister, and formed the substance of the letter she immediately sent to her father.

"Rudolph, your mother is ill."

It was the first time for more than a year that he had mentioned her to his son. Rudolph looked up in his face, and said—

"Oh, father!" in a tone that contained so much of entreaty and

remonstrance, that the Count was melted, and started at once for the capital.

Theresa was indeed ill ; but though so thin and so pale, there was an expression of deep humility and sweet, patient resignation on her countenance, which redeemed its plainness. Flora loved her mother very much, and was dreading the day when she would have to leave her again. Olivia had been miserable ever since her sister's words had alarmed her. One morning Theresa felt more than ever an intense longing to see her boy. Flora came to her room.

" Oh, Flora," said Theresa, " I *must* see Rudolph. I shall die if I do not see him. Indeed, I think so ; and then poor Olivia."

" And poor me, mamma ; you don't know how I love you. Surely papa will send Rudolph when he knows you are ill."

" Have you told him, Flora ? "

" Yes, mamma."

" The Countess Flora is wanted," said a servant at the door.

In a few minutes Flora re-entered the room ; her mother was kneeling by the sofa, with her face buried in the cushion. Olivia stood near her. Suddenly the blind child raised her head.

" Mamma, whose step is that ? "

" Mamma," said Flora, " Rudolph is here ;"—and in another moment he was in his mother's arms.

Olivia stood silent, but presently said—" There is another step."

Theresa knew it was the Count's, but she kept her face hidden on Rudolph's shoulder, and did not look up. He came nearer—nearer—put his hand on Olivia's head, and she said—

"Papa! oh, tell me if mamma looks ill, as Flora says."

He stroked her hair gently, but did not speak. Olivia was perplexed and disappointed.

"Mamma," she said, "is it papa? Do tell me."

And then when no one answered, she exclaimed—"Oh, I wish I could see!"

Theresa could not resist this.

"Yes, my love, you are right, it is papa,"—and she looked up for one moment almost reproachfully. She claimed nothing for herself—oh, no!—but she could not bear him to neglect Olivia. He took the blind child in his arms.

"Yes, it is papa; he is come to fetch you."

"Not me, papa, please—Flora. I must stay with mamma."

The Count whispered something in her ear.

"Oh, yes," said Olivia joyfully; "Mamma, will you go?"

"Where, my love?"

"With papa and me to Schlossbergenheim."

Theresa could not answer. She saw she was forgiven, and in her repentance, and her joy words failed. But Olivia soon found herself placed tenderly in her brother's arms, and he told her they were all to return *home* together as soon as mamma was strong enough to bear the journey. A few weeks of happiness restored her strength, and she returned to the home of her early married life, humble, thankful, and happy. Plain, indeed, her face now was, but not so plain as in her early years; there was one great difference. Instead of the fretful, discontented expression, which told of longings for a blessing

withheld, her whole countenance now bore the impress of a contented mind—too full of faith to doubt the wisdom that ruled her lot—too conscious of her own unworthiness, to question the decrees that were so much more merciful than she deserved. One great trial still remained in Olivia's blindness ; but even this had a sunny side. To her dying day Olivia believed that her mother was beautiful, and it would have been cruel to try and convince her that the face she loved was changed.

Strange tales were told to account for the change ; but, after a time, it was generally believed that the Countess, having had the small-pox at the same time with her children, had thereby lost all her beauty,—that her vanity was too great to endure the loss patiently, and that she had therefore shut herself up,—that the Count had taken a great dislike to her in consequence,—and that two years having brought her to a sense of her folly, he had at last been prevailed on to forgive her. The contempt which her supposed conduct received, was nothing to that which her real conduct merited. She felt this—bore all—resented nothing, and lived to win back the esteem that had been hers when she least deserved it.

THE END.



